

President Nixon's Address to the German Parliament,  
February 26, 1969

Mr. President, Mr. Chancellor, Your Excellencies, members of the Parliament:

It is a very great honor for me to appear before this legislative body and to respond to the very generous words of welcome that I have just heard from the presiding officer of this body.

At the outset I regret that I find it necessary to have a translator. I do say, though, that having heard his translation, he had every word right - every word.

Mr. President, you spoke of some of the great items that bind our two nations and our two peoples together. I spoke at the airport this morning of the fact that we in the United States owe so much to our German heritage.

And I can speak personally on that point because the grandmother of my two daughters on their mother's side was born in Germany.

I would like to speak of those principles and ideals that will continue to bind us together in the years ahead. First the great Alliance of which we are a part. This Alliance is strong today and must be maintained in strength in the years ahead.

The success of this Alliance is indicated by the fact that in the 20 years that it has existed, that we have had peace, as far as this part of the world is concerned, and that every one of the nations in the Alliance that was free 20 years ago is free today, including the free city of Berlin.

We are bound together, too, by the economic factors that two great and productive peoples have produced in our two countries. And we know that a strong and productive German economy is essential for a strong free world economy, just as is a strong economy in the United States.

We are bound together, too, by a common dedication to the cause of peace-peace not only for ourselves but for all mankind.

As we enter what I have described as a period of negotiations with those who have been our opponents, we recognize that for those negotiations to succeed it is essential that we maintain the strength that made negotiations possible.

But having spoken of the bonds of national heritage and background, the alliance of the economic factors, those bonds that bring us together, I would add, finally, one that is demonstrated by my presence in this chamber today. We believe, both of our countries and our peoples, in representative government, in free and vigorous debate, and in free and vigorous elections.

And having just been through the ordeal of an election campaign, I wish all of you well in your campaigns. That, as I am sure you will understand, is the international language of politics, being on both sides of the same issue.

Finally, as I stand before this parliamentary body, I realize that we share so many common traditions and it is to me a very moving experience to report to you that since becoming President of the United States I have not yet had the opportunity to appear before our own Congress, and I have not yet appeared before a legislative body in any other country.

In other words, as I stand here today before this Parliament, this is the first time that I, as President of the United States, have appeared before any legislative body in the whole world.

Mr. President, I will have many honors during the period that I will hold office, but I can assure you that as one who began his political career as a Congressman and served in that post for 4 years, and who then served in our Senate for 2 years, and then served as Vice President of the United States and President of the Senate in the chair where you sit for 8 years, that there will be no honor greater than the one I have today to address my fellow legislators.

(President Nixon was the first foreigner to address the German Bundestag)

( Public Papers of the Presidents. Richard M. Nixon, 1969, p. 151. Washington D.C. GPO, 1970)